

- RNs in pre- or post-anesthesia positions showed a very strong association ($r^2 = 0.83$, p-value = 0.0029).
- In community settings, both RNs and LPNs employed in medical practices showed a moderate association between patient loads and the frequency of short staffing impacts (RNs: $r^2 = 0.37$, p-value = 0.0245; LPNs: $r^2 = 0.25$, p-value = 0.0201).

So, even though there were no significant differences found in the overall frequency of short staffing between different hospital unit types or across different community settings (see Tables 6 and 7), there was a difference when patient load is considered in addition to a staff nurse's employment setting. The results of the correlation analysis reveal the environments in which the relationship between a staff nurse's average daily patient load and the frequency with which short staffing interferes with patient care seems to be the strongest. For those in hospital in-patient settings, this relationship may be accentuated because of the demands of particular patient populations (i.e. neonatal, peri-operative, med/surg) in combination with staffing levels. For those working in medical practice offices it may have more to do with the absolute size of the patient load and how much it can vary from one day to the next, while staff size remains constant.

Job and Career Satisfaction among RN and LPN Staff Nurses

Research addressing levels of satisfaction among nurses has consistently shown that nurses tend to be more satisfied with their career choice of nursing, but less satisfied with their job or work environment. Given the current concern about an increasing shortage of nurses and anecdotal claims that nurses are leaving the profession, it is important to distinguish between how staff nurses feel about their jobs versus how they feel about their nursing careers. The number of nurses that change jobs may create vacancies within facilities (which are sometimes interpreted as a shortage), but, as long as those nurses continue to take new jobs, the size of the available labor force is not reduced. However, when nurses become dissatisfied with nursing as a career choice, they may leave the profession altogether, depleting the nursing labor force.

Staff nurses' satisfaction with their current job and with nursing as a career were measured by asking nurses to indicate their agreement with a set of 7 statements. Response options ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a 5-point scale. Our assumption is that level of agreement with a specific statement also indicates level of satisfaction with that aspect of a nurse's job or career. Four of the seven items used (items a, b, e and f in Table 9) were chosen from a list of global measures of satisfaction with nursing, or intention to leave either nursing or a current position which were developed by Lynn and Morgan.⁴ The additional three items were created by the authors of this report to provide additional range on the measures of job and career satisfaction. Table 9 summarizes the original 5 point scale into three response categories. The results reveal that approximately half of staff RNs and LPNs are satisfied with their work environments, while about two-thirds are satisfied with their career choice, consistent with previous research findings.